

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES July 23, 2003

Stay out of Liberia!

Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that while we encourage a regional West African effort to resolve the Liberia crisis, the United States military has no role - either alone or as part of a multinational force - in that country.

We all recognize the tragedy in Liberia. A civil war has raged there for the past 14 years, leaving thousands dead and a million without homes. Horrific stories of atrocities abound. We wish for peace and a resolution to the conflict. But we must recognize that this resolution should come through regional West African efforts. These are the countries involved and affected; these are the countries with the most incentive to resolve the problem. Simply stated, there is no US national security interest at stake in the conflict - no matter how widely "national interest" is defined.

But the administration is currently pondering repeated calls by some in the US and especially the United Nations to commit thousands of troops to a full-fledged American operation in Liberia. According to press reports, the Pentagon has just ordered about 4,500 sailors and marines from the Horn of Africa into the Mediterranean Sea, so as to be closer to Liberia just in case.

Before we commit our troops to yet another foreign intervention, Congress must at the very least consider the implications of further committing our already seriously overextended military. According to recent press reporting, of the 33 brigades that make up the entirety of the US Army's active duty combat forces, all but just three brigades are either currently engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea; are committed to other missions; or are reconstituting. This suggests that the US military is in serious danger of becoming over-extended.

Mr. Speaker, there is no US interest in the conflict and US military involvement could well lead to resentment and more violence against US troops, as we saw in Somalia. We must ponder this possibility before yet again putting our men and women in uniform in harm's way.

I hope very much that my colleagues will join me in this effort and that we may see a quick Floor vote on this very important measure.